

COB News

Coordination of Benefits (COB) News is a quarterly newsletter for Medicare contractors, employers, and others interested in Medicare COB.

Inside This Issue:

- ◆ Welcome
- ◆ Introduction of COB Contractor
- ◆ When You See this Symbol, You Know It's Us
- ◆ A New Look and Improved Service
- ◆ Bulletin Board Service: Now Quick and Easy
- ◆ Customer Service
- ◆ Change of Mailing Address
- ◆ Our Next Issue

Welcome

We are pleased to provide you with our 1st edition of COB News. This newsletter and subsequent quarterly publications will include information on new COB activity. We hope you will spend a few minutes reading this newsletter. It provides us with a way to communicate with you

and display our commitment to keeping you well informed of COB activity. ✧

Introduction of COB Contractor

On November 1, 1999, the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) awarded the COB contract to consolidate the activities that support the collection, management, and reporting of all other health insurance coverage of Medicare beneficiaries. Centralizing Medicare's COB activities is a new HCFA initiative. HCFA, an agency of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), administers various social services programs including the daily activities of the Medicare and Medicaid programs. HCFA's goals are to provide high-quality and efficient customer service to Medicare beneficiaries, providers, suppliers, insurers, and employers while ensuring the integrity of the Medicare Trust

Fund. COB plays an integral role in attaining these goals.

The purposes of the COB program are:

- To identify the health benefits available to a Medicare beneficiary, and
- To coordinate the payment process to prevent mistaken payment of Medicare benefits.

Information on eligibility and benefits entitlement is collected and stored in a central file used to facilitate accurate claim payments.

In April 2000, the first two phases of the COB contract were implemented: the Initial Enrollment Questionnaire and the Internal Revenue Service/ Social Security Administration/ Health Care Financing Administration Data Match (IRS/SSA/HCFA Data Match) Project. The remaining two phases are Medicare Secondary Payer (MSP) Claims Investigation,

currently scheduled to be implemented on January 1, 2001, and the Coordination of Benefits Agreements (Trading Partner Agreements), currently scheduled to be implemented on April 1, 2001.

HCFA is committed to fulfilling its obligations to the Medicare community and embraces the COB program as a method to carry out these obligations and achieve its goal. ✧

When You See this Symbol, You Know It's Us



"To assure that claims are paid right the first time, every time."

A New Look

The Data Match questionnaire form has been changed to make it easier for employers to use. The changes in the form will allow for more:

- Accurate and efficient completion of the questionnaire, and

- Fewer errors because it is easier to read and understand. ✧

Bulletin Board Service: Now Quick and Easy

For the convenience of employers responding to the IRS/SSA/HCFA Data Match questionnaire, we have upgraded the Bulletin Board Service (BBS) application to provide faster, easier, and user-friendly service. This application now has the look and feel of a Windows application.

Why Use the BBS?

It is a more convenient way to submit the Data Match questionnaire. The BBS will also minimize the need for follow-up because the customized program provides an on-line editing feature that checks your responses for completeness and consistency. If you require assistance once you have entered the BBS, or you experience any technical problems, contact our Electronic Media Department at (646) 458-6633 or (646) 458-6678. ✧

Customer Service

Let our trained staff help you with your COB questions. Whether you need a question answered or assistance completing a questionnaire, our Customer Service Representatives are available to provide you with quality service Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Eastern Time, except holidays.

Use our toll-free lines:

1-800-999-1118
or TDD/TYY (for the hearing impaired)
1-800-318-8782 ✧

Change of Mailing Address

Effective April 1, 2000, our new address is:

MEDICARE - COB
P.O. Box 125
New York, NY 10274-0125 ✧

Our Next Issue

COB News will be issued quarterly. If you would like to be included on our mailing list, contact us at the address indicated above.